



Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council

*Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Chair
Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Vice Chair
Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr.
Councilor John Thorpe*

On-line Zoom Meeting

Meeting Date: September 3, 2020

Note: The Finance Committee Meeting took place during the City Council Meeting as announced. The City Council Meeting began at 7 p.m.

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** At 10:01 p.m., Councilor Sciarra called the meeting to order.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were committee members Gina-Louise Sciarra (Chair), Marianne LaBarge (Vice-Chair), Michael J. Quinlan, Jr. and John Thorpe. Also present from the City Council were William H. Dwight, Alex Jarrett, Karen Foster, Rachel Maiore and Jim Nash.
3. **Financial Orders**
 - A. **20.111 An Order To Accept Land And Surplus It For Affordable Housing At Laurel Street And Burts Pit Road**

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Thorpe seconded.

It has been a long process to get to this point, Mayor Narkewicz said. When the Northampton State Hospital closed, there was legislation decommissioning it and a series of parcels were dispersed under the Acts of 1994 for various purposes, including the community gardens to the Recreation Department and agricultural land to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School. Several parcels were also designated to go to the Northampton Housing Authority (NHA) to be redeveloped as affordable housing and a time certain was given for this purpose. NHA was able to develop some of the parcels that were deeded (i.e., the Mary McColgan house on Grove Street) but, because of lack of funding from the state, it was never able to develop these two parcels for affordable housing and the legislation tolled.

The city began a process back in 2015, first, asking the housing authority to declare that it was unable to develop the parcels, then getting a home rule petition from the City Council to seek an amendment to 1994 legislation to transfer the parcels to the city to develop as affordable housing rather than giving them to NHA. The initial legislation referenced in the order was adopted, but there was a glitch somewhere between the house and the senate in that language providing that there be no consideration was omitted. The city

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then began a process of trying to re-amend the legislation but lost both its state representative and state senator. The bill got carried over to the most current session where they have been working with Senator Comerford and Representative Sabadosa to finally get it over the finish line, which they almost have. It is basically corrective language to what was adopted in 2016 and says that these two parcels will be transferred to the City of Northampton for no consideration and developed for affordable housing.

This is anticipating that the governor will sign the legislation and the land will be transferred to the city. The council is then authorizing this land to be surplus to city uses and moved to affordable housing. Once the governor signs, there will be a citation (the Acts of 2020) so they expect to amend the order to fill that in on 2nd reading. City officials have really wanted to get these parcels into production. There used to be an old structure on the lot on Laurel Street and is still a structure on the property on Burts Pit Road. Planners would work with the local affordable housing development community to get those converted into affordable housing. They are asking the council to authorize the next steps in that process, he concluded.

Councilor LaBarge said she tried to find that house. Mayor Narkewicz explained that the lot is really overgrown.

She asked about specific plans for the lot.

The city would put out an RFP and work with organizations like Valley CDC or Habitat for Humanity to develop the property, Mayor Narkewicz advised. He assured the legislature in testimony and letters that the city would not be making any kind of a profit on this. The city is just going to carry out the actual mission of the legislation. There is not an end user or design yet. His assumption would be that they would be looking at one or two units of housing.

There being no further comments, the motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

4. **New Business**

None.

5. **Adjourn:** There being no further business, Councilor Quinlan moved to adjourn. Councilor Thorpe seconded. The motion carried on a roll call vote of 4 Yes, 0 No. The meeting adjourned at 10:17 p.m.

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